

## Steelhead-Inspired Scotch at Iron Fish Distillery

Michigan's first farm-based distillery opens near Thompsonville

By Jacob Wheeler  
Current Editor

"Retirement" is a strange proposition. Some Baby Boomers waltz into the sunset, sleep late, and catch up on their bedside books. Others grow restless and launch new ventures.

When Richard Anderson turned 60 in the spring of 2014, his wife, Sarah, sent him on a scotch tour of Scotland along with her brothers-in-law, David Wallace and Craig Maxwell. They were touring several 300-year-old, farm-based distilleries on the island of Islay—famous for its "whiskey tourism"—when the taste of smoky peat infected the men with a novel idea: why not build a spirits distillery on the 119-acre farm that Wallace and his wife, Heidi Bolger, had recently acquired near

Thompsonville?

The idea stuck, they gave each other assignments, and, by the time they left Islay, a plan was already fermenting. Anderson and Wallace paid a deposit on high-end, German-made whiskey stills and equipment, and together with their wives, the entrepreneurs set out to build Michigan's first farm-based distillery.



From left, Richard and Sarah Anderson, distiller Dan Krolczyk, David Wallace and Heidi Bolger celebrate the opening Labor Day weekend of Iron Fish Distillery. Photo by Jacob Wheeler.

Less than two and a half years later, Iron Fish Distillery will open over Labor Day weekend on a 119-acre farm on Dzuibanek Road, a dirt thoroughfare that is three miles from Crystal Mountain Resort, five miles from downtown Thompsonville, and just south of the Manistee-Benzie county line. Nearby meanders the tranquil Betsie River. The rural property is so beautiful that you might sip a spirit and stay all afternoon, and it is so remote that you would slip into the 19th century if it were not for the buzzing of the smart phone in your pocket.

"We could have created an urban distillery or a distillery in downtown Frankfort," Richard Anderson says. "But

Please see Iron Fish on page 9

## A Temple in the Elberta Hills

Tracking down the story

By Beau Vallance  
Current Contributor

Somewhere in the woods near Elberta is a surprising round structure—about 10 feet high and maybe 20 feet in diameter—that is made of spaced horizontal wooden slats. The place is built of untreated spruce, pine, and fir, with metal braces.

An open roof of wood girders holds up a perfect open circle in the center. Two open entrances—no attached doors—almost face each other. Inside the structure, a low, wide plinth curves against the walls, forming a bench where several people could comfortably sit. In the center of the decking floor is a low concrete ring, topping an inward-sloping cylinder about four feet deep; at first guess, it looks like a fire pit, but there is no char. A seam along the cylinder seems to indi-

cate True North. The structure looks "modern." There is no graffiti, no trash, no vandalism. It has aged, but it is intact.

I first heard about the puzzling place recently, when I was visiting Mr. Joy, chair caner and screen repairer, at his shop behind Beulah on Commercial Avenue. (For those who missed it, I wrote about 95-year-old Mr. Joy



An aging temple turns gray. Left photo taken in 2001 by Steven Schauer; right photo taken in 2016 by Beau Vallance.

and his business last season, in Volume IV Issue 10 of *The Betsie Current*: bit.ly/1Qe2xPx) With him were his son, Jimmy, and friends, Chris and Steve.

Mid-conversation, Chris left for a second and returned with some black-and-white photos of the strange wood structure that he and Jimmy had found in a steep valley in the forest. Despite that the images were rough—printed onto plain 8x11 white pieces of paper from his computer—I was immediately intrigued. The photos provoked fascinating guesses as to what it is; as it turns out, that is the structure's purpose—but I am getting ahead of myself.

"What do you think this is?" Chris

Please see Temple on page 6

## Cat's Meow

New Benzie nonprofit helps stray cats

By Kelly Ottinger  
Current Contributor

Each year in Michigan, nearly 100,000 cats in local shelters are euthanized. Many are healthy—their only crime being that they were born into and are trying to survive in a feral life situation.

Carol McKee, veterinarian and founder of Community Cats of Benzie County (CCBC), has seen first-hand the heart-wrenching effects of feral cats being brought into a shelter. McKee, who for 29 years owned Southpointe Veterinary Hospital in Allen Park, has been volunteering veterinary care at the Benzie County Animal Shelter for more than two years.

"During that time, I saw the only solution offered to citizens who called about



Strays have a higher socialization potential when they are younger. Nova the black lab cuddles with Bacon, who was found in Frankfort as a stray kitten. She was later spayed, renamed Princess, and relocated to another home to live her life as a house cat. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

feral cats was that they could borrow traps from the shelter, trap them, and bring them in to be euthanized," McKee says.

She goes on to explain that feral cats—being truly wild by nature—are not candidates to be taken in by the shelter. They are deemed a danger to the employees, and they do not adjust well to being caged. Moreover, efforts to socialize feral cats to humans can take months and are rarely successful.

CCBC Is TNR

Residents report feral cats to their local animal control for a variety of reasons. The cats may be fighting, hanging around homes to be fed (also affecting the family budget), having close calls with traffic, or they may appear injured.

People often begin feeding feral cats

Please see Stray Cats on page 7

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## Erudite Emptiness

Dunes Review fills a literary vacuum

By Sarah Bearup-Neal

Current Contributor

Nature abhors a vacuum. The same can be said for creative writers without an outlet for publishing their work. And that, dear reader, is one way of explaining how the *Dunes Review*, a local literary journal, came to be.

The first issue of the *Dunes Review* was published in 1997. Up until that point, there had been no regional publication devoted to publishing creative literature, nor to supporting the work of developing and established local writers, says founder Anne-Marie Oomen, a playwright and memoirist.

"You could occasionally get something published in *Traverse Magazine*," says Oomen, an Empire resident.

Or, for a short time, local creative writers had an outlet for their work in *Small Towner*, a periodical founded in the early 1980s by Peter Phinny of Glen Arbor. Phinny also acted as the quarterly's editor, and he published it throughout the 1980s. *Small Towner* emphasized the arts in many forms: literary fiction and poetry, the visual arts, and interviews with local artists of merit.

"But when the *Small Towner* ended, that was pretty much it. I'd just come back to the region [in 1996] and was acutely aware that there was this gap," Oomen says. "We had so many talented people and no place to showcase their work." So, she created a place.

"It was a time in my life when I could taken on a big project, and there was state funding available," Oomen says.

### Changes Over Time

The inaugural *Dunes Review* appeared in the spring of 1997. It was 72 recycled-paper pages of poems, essays, and creative nonfiction by 38 writers who were living in or tied to Leelanau, Manistee, and Benzie counties. In all, there were 300 submissions to that first journal, juried by seven of Oomen's writing peers.

Although Oomen was the ring-leader, she was aided and abetted in this project by a band of many, many volunteers, as well as through the sponsorship of three institutions: the Glen Arbor Art Association, in partnership with the Traverse Area Arts Council, and the Michigan Council for the Arts (MCA), from which came a \$2,000 grant. That last financial bit is a notable—in the first issue's "Editor's Notes," Oomen wrote: "Dreams aside, none of [the publication of the *Dunes Review*] can happen without the continued interest of readers and writers. In the face of a changing political climate, the government support which partially funded this project is tedious at best."

Oomen's prognostication came to pass.

"The MCA has reorganized, and now it's much harder to get money for projects like

*Dunes Review*," she says of current affairs. "It's discouraging."

The first issues of *Dunes Review* were \$5 a copy.

"We placed it in all local bookstores but mostly hand sold it, mostly from readings," Oomen explains, adding that they also sold out of the trunk of her car. Today, the publication is available for \$25 through annual subscription or as a benefit of becoming a member of Michigan Writers, a Traverse City-based literary organization.

Founded in 2001, Michigan Writers exists to "encourage and support writers of all ages, skills levels, and genres in the Great Lakes state by providing opportunities for networking, publication, and education." According to editor Jennifer Yeatts, there are about 450 members. Michigan Writers now publishes *Dunes Review* in April and October.

### What's In A Name?

The "dunes" of the *Review's* name references one of this region's most iconic and place-defining geologic formations, the Sleeping Bear.



Jennifer Yeatts, current editor of the *Dunes Review*, holding a copy of the literary journal.

"I wanted [the publication] to reflect a connection to the region, so we also considered *Moraines Review* as a possible title; but we went with *Dunes Review*, because everybody would identify with it," Oomen says.

Place, place consciousness, and the awareness of placemaking: These were dominant themes in the writing—both creative and reportorial—of the 1990s. "Place" was a topic that allowed writers to celebrate, analyze, revisit, and re-imagine the culture of small towns and villages, not to mention the ways in which they were shaped and influenced by

natural and human communities. True to the times, the first *Dunes Review* offered poems noting a "frost-flowered window," purple thistles, and—from Glen Arbor poet Lara Alderman—a "Grasshopper in the Corner of the Room." In her essay "Writing Me," Traverse City journalist Loraine Anderson wrote: "Place, a physical place, shapes us and inscribes our scribbling. It inspires us or saddens us or angers us, and it draws the story out."

Oomen edited *Dunes Review* for five years, then retired from it. Publication of the journal continued through the work of more volunteers, including former Maple City resident Holly Wren Spaulding, who passed the editor's baton on to Yeatts in 2013. Reflecting on the *Dunes Review* in its 20th year, Yeatts, a Traverse City resident, says: "We fill a niche as a journal with a strong regional, Midwest/Great Lakes identity, with powerful Michigan roots at heart."

Today, there are other Michigan-based, small-press, literary journals, including *Third Coast*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Passages North*, all of which, Yeatts says "are going strong." The void that first spurred Oomen nearly two decades ago has since been filled.

### Today

The *Dunes Review* in 2016 still offers knowing paeans to things and experiences that result from living alertly and consciously in-place: Kirk Westphal's love letter to a wooden canoe in local waters; and in Christopher Crew's "Today," a poetic inventory of fall apples "spooned full of sun" and maple trees turned vermilion "faster than deer can strip the bark."

Not all of the subjects in the newest issue of *Dunes Review* are bucolic, however. Just as Yeatts acknowledges the ways that technological advances have improved the publication—spiffed up the way the journal is bound, smartened up the cover art, made it easier to publish in general—technology itself becomes the subject of what is being published. For example, Alexander Payne Morgan's poem, "Programmers for the End of the World," with its references to Facebook and "smart-phone chats," or "Everybody Hates Facebook," in which Deborah Bacharach free versifies about the social-est of media. "For silly videos of cute cats, reposted articles I could have read in *The New York Times* myself if I had a subscription, which I don't so appreciate being pointed to race riots in Midwestern states ..."

A panel of six or so "regular, trusted readers" assist Yeatts in evaluating submissions for each new issue. She is interested in publishing anything that makes her want to re-read it, anything that pulls her back into the story, regardless of genre.

"We are particularly drawn to pieces that have some echo of our Northern Michigan region," Yeatts says. "It may be a thin line or thread—maybe there are some reference to cherries or a freshwater lake we're all familiar with—but that's what we're drawn to."

In her "Editor's Notes," Anne-Marie Oomen expressed the hope that the first issue of the *Dunes Review* would lead to another, would provide space for a wide range of regional voices, would "become a document which we can turn to and say, 'This is who we are,' and perhaps a hundred years from now, a young historian will dust off the first issue and say, 'This is how we sounded then...' in this place."

"Place," at least as a literary subject, has been transmogrified by this odd, arguably surreal Facebookian universe, thrust upon us. Yet, 20 years down the road, the *Dunes Review* has not only absorbed the blow but rolled with it.

And yes, Oomen's original hope for the *Dunes Review* remains. It is still "[a] witness. Testimony. Voice." It is all there, dear reader, still in the *Dunes Review's* DNA.

## The Betsie Current

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*The Betsie Current* is a free tabloid, published 12 times this year and distributed throughout Benzie County. Advertising inquiries, comments, suggestions, critiques, articles, photos, poems, and letters are welcome. © 2016, *The Betsie Current*, all rights reserved. www.BetsieCurrent.com

# Birthdays in Benzie

Where to go for free treats

By Aubrey Ann Parker  
Current Editor

My 90-year-old grandmother-in-law is one smart cookie Anne “A.J.” (MacDonald) Borkowski has lived a good, long life. She has seen and experienced a lot: both love and loss, hardship and triumph, the highs and lows of existence. She served in World War II. She studied at Michigan State University. She helped her husband to run his business. She raised 10 kids.

Given all of this, I trust Grandma A.J.’s wisdom. And one of the insights that she quotes most frequently is that your 30s are the best age range to be.

“I call them the Peter Pan years,” A.J. says. “Because you are smart enough to not do stupid things anymore, and your body is still in good enough shape that you can do practically anything that you want to do.”

One smart cookie, right?

When I turned 30 last year, it seemed like everyone was asking if that was difficult for

me. The simple answer was no; I had A.J.’s wisdom to carry me through. But the long answer took a little more explanation; turning 29 was way harder for me than turning 30 was. That is because, when I turned 29, there were all of these “almost” thoughts running through my head. “OMG, I am almost out of 20s.” “Like, wow, I am almost 30.” “Boo, it’s so terrible to be almost in my 30s but still be labeled as in my 20s, because I feel a helluva lot closer to 30 than to 20.”



Since the Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grill gives you a free meal on your birthday, you can splurge on the \$11.50 “adios pink pantalones” drink, made with prickly pear cactus juice. Photo by Jordan Bates.

So when I actually turned 30, it was as if I had already experienced all of that anxiety and woe and dread at the change over from 28 to 29 that everyone seemed to expect me to have when I turned 30. But by that point in time, I had moved on from denial to acceptance. “People in their 30s are ‘real’ adults; more mature, with real jobs and stuff. People in their 20s are, like, college kids and stuff. I’m way more of a ‘real’ adult than a college kid. And that’s like totally awesome.”

However—despite repeating A.J.’s mantra that the 30s are the Peter Pan years—I must admit that turning 31 was harder for me than turning 30 was, and probably harder than turning 29, too. Part of that was the realism of it all. “Wow, like, I’m not just 30; I’m actually in my 30s now. As in, 30 plus one.”

But the biggest reason that 31 was so difficult probably had more to do with being alone for the majority of my 31st birthday, whereas my 30th had been spent with friends and family. (Sigh, the trials and tribulations of becoming a ‘real’ adult who has ‘real’ work deadlines, not to mention adult friends with their own adult responsibilities and a partner with his own demanding schedule.)

I decided that the best way to cheer myself up was to go and get a bunch of free stuff. And—lucky for all you readers out there in *Betsie Current* Land—I have summed up a list of all of the places in Benzie County that one can go on his or her birthday to get free treats... enjoy! (Just remember to bring your ID!)

**Coho:** Have dinner at this Frankfort restaurant with a great view of the water, and you will receive a free dessert of your choosing.

**Crescent Bakery:** This Frankfort-based business offers a free doughnut for birthdays.

**Dinghy’s Restaurant & Bar:** Sign up for their email list, and you will receive one free entrée with the purchase of another entrée during the entire month of your birthday. (Frankfort)

**L’Chayim Delicatessen:** As of press time, even grumpy old Jonathan Clark has (grudgingly) agreed to start a new birthday program—head to the Beulah location, mention this article, and get a free bagel and a cup of coffee! (We’re, mostly, just kidding; we love Jonathan and his notoriously grumpy attitude. But for real, if you are the first to receive this special new offer, let us know on our Facebook page!)

**Platte River Inn:** You can get a free meal up to \$20 in value—breakfast, lunch, or dinner! They have everything from omelettes to fish to steak, and almost everything falls below that \$20 price point. (Honor Papano’s Pizza: Sign up for their email list, and the Beulah site will give you \$5 off during the month of your birthday.)

**Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grill:** Any entrée of your choosing is free at the top of the hill in Benzonia. (I always go for the shrimp and steak fajitas, the most expensive thing on their menu; plus make your own tacos from sizzling ingredients is hands-on birthday fun!)

**Stormcloud Brewing Company:** Get a free pint of your choosing at this Frankfort establishment, recently named Michigan’s Best New Brewery by the folks at *MLive*. (My personal favorite is the Nightswimmer, “as dark as a night of skinny dipping.”)

And one last goodie, for good measure. (I know that this is technically outside of Benzie County, but it is definitely within range, especially for those who reside closer to the Lake Ann area.)

**Moomers:** Located near Traverse City West High School, this homemade ice cream shop will give you a discount percentage that is based on your age. In other words, I could have gone in for 31 percent off this year, had I known about the deal before I wrote this article!

Fortunately, you do not have to be like me, wondering where to go for free stuff on your birthday, because you have this handy dandy list! You’re welcome.

## Labor Day Weekend Blowout Sale

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

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**Mondays**

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 10-11am.

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. Infants and toddlers (+ their parents/caregivers) will have fun rhyming and moving with Miss Char, as well as a focus on repetition. Each week, children build their repertoire of rhymes, both old and new. There is an informal playgroup following Circle Time. 10-11am.

Yoga class for seniors led at no charge by Michelle Leines at The Gathering Place Senior Center, 10579 Main Street in the Honor Plaza. 231-525-0601. 10-11am.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center, including families! Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult and child pair. It can be as fun or focused as a student prefers, and all skill levels should consider taking part. 11am-2pm.

Cards at The Gathering Place. We have a dedicated group of card sharks who play Pinochle weekly during lunch, but we aren't limited to Pinochle: join us for euchre, cribbage, and rummy, too! 12-1pm.

Zumba at The Gathering Place. Your first class is free, and then it's only \$3! All ability levels are welcome. 2:30pm.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market at 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) in Benzonia. 3-7pm.

**Tuesdays**

Rise and Shine yoga with Jessica at Oliver Art Center. 7:15am.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. 9-10am.

Honor Farmers' & Flea Market in Maley Park. Across from the shopping plaza and senior center with plenty of off-road parking. 9am-3pm.

Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort offers technology assistance. Learn to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 10am-12pm.

Freshwater Flow with Jessica at Oliver Art Center. 10:30am.

Music by the Melody Makers at The Gathering Place. 10:30am-12pm.

Knitting Group at Benzonia Public Library. A "knit-along" project for those who want

to work on the same project, or bring your own project if you prefer. Call Michele at 231-383-5716 with any questions. 1-3pm.

Chair Yoga class for \$5 at The Gathering Place. 3:30-4:30pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center. Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult and child pair. 3:30-6:30pm.

MakerSpace Club: Be part of a community and get creative playing Minecraft, building with Legos, coloring, making something unique using our random craft bin, teaching yourself to code, and the like. Benzonia Public Library. 5-7pm.

Zumba at The Gathering Place. 6pm.

Yoga with Kari at Pleasant Valley Community Center in Arcadia. 231-383-1883. 6-7:30pm.

**Wednesdays**

Zumba at The Gathering Place. 8:30am.

Stay Fit with Doris at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Open art studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 11am-5pm.

Yin Yoga with Bruce at Oliver Art Center. 10:30am.

Bingo at The Gathering Place. Cost is \$1.00 per card or bring a prize. 12:30-1:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

**Thursdays**

Rise and Shine yoga with Jessica at Oliver Art Center. 7:15am.

Elberta Farmers' Market at the Elberta Pavilion Park. 8am-12:30pm.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. 9-10am.

Adult coloring at Benzie Shores District Library. All materials provided. 10-11am.

Bible Study at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Yoga with Bruce at Oliver Art Center. 10:30am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. Read to Rosie, the cute little dog! 1-5pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Ware Farm of Bear Lake. 231-383-1883. 3-4:30pm.

Open Mic with Bill Frary at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 8pm.

**Fridays**

Freshwater Flow with Jessica at Oliver Art Center. 7:15am.

Pilates Sculpt with Anna at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 10-11am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 9:30-10:30am.

Integrated Yoga with Jessica at Oliver Art Center. Young or old, novice or seasoned practitioner, yoga is for everyone! Explore yoga on your own terms and discover all that it can do for you. Adult drop-in fee is \$15, student/senior drop-in fee is \$10. Call 231-620-3528 if interested. 7:15am.

Wii Bowling at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Crystal Mountain Farmers' Market in Thompsonville. 3-6pm.

**Saturdays**

Frankfort Farmers' Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th and 9th streets, along the waterfront. 9am-1pm.

Yoga + Pilates + Strength = Fitness Fusion at Oliver Art Center. 9-10am. Call Beth at 770-235-9306.

Dog play group at Benzonia Memorial Dog Park are lots of fun and open to the public! 10am for small dogs; 11am for big dogs.

Computer Basics with Dustin at the Benzonia Public Library: Stop in and let Dustin help you unlock the mysteries of the computer! You may bring your own or use one of our public computers. These sessions are FREE! 11am-1pm.

Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage-food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

**Sundays**

Church services all around Benzie County.

**ON DECK**

**Thursday, September 1**


A peer-lead, non-fiction writers' group meets every other Thursday and is looking for a few new members who are interested in sharing works-in-progress for feedback and in providing input and insights to other members. Contact Camille Vettraino at cvfma@yahoo.com for more information. Oliver Arts Center. 2-4pm.

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**Thursday, September 1**

Betsie Valley Elementary School's open house is a chance to meet your child's teacher and more! Free hair cuts, free food (Grill Benzie Food Truck), give aways, and more! 3:30-5:30pm.

**Thursday, September 1**

Not Your Mother's Book Club at Darcy Library is meant to challenge the way that you think about the world. Unlike traditional book groups, we'll be exploring a topical theme over the course of the year—first up is feminism and Islam. 6-7pm.

**Thursday, September 1**

Dags und Timmah will be live on the patio at Lake Ann Brewing Company with critically acclaimed original and British-influenced alternative/classic rock music. Deep cuts, rhythmically challenging tunes, extraordinary rhythm and groove! 6:30-7:30pm.

**Thursday, September 1**

Benzie Audubon presents Kirk Jones at the Tribal Outpost for a great bee program, fit for the whole family. Free, open to the public. 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia. 7pm.

**Thursday, September 1**

Stormcloud Brewing Company welcomes Dot Org back to the stormy stage. They are an Alma-based jazz organ trio, having performed at several Michigan jazz festivals including the Lansing Jazz Festival, the Blues Jazz and R&B Fest in East Lansing, CMU Jazz Weekend, and the Alma College Jazz Festival. Dot Org has also performed at the Sunday Night Jazz Jam at SpeakeEZ Lounge in Grand Rapids. Come see these rising jazz stars in downtown Frankfort! 8-10pm.

**Friday, September 2**

Iron Fish Distillery is celebrating their grand opening this Labor Day weekend. They will be open 12-10pm on Friday and Saturday with music on Saturday starting at 4:30pm. Expect a bagpipe kick-off, Yada Yada, Jacob Sigman, Speak Easy, and Walter Cano. Grill Benzie food truck will be serving food on Sunday, with hour from 12-7pm. Two of Iron Fish's spirits are ready for tasting!

**Friday, September 2**

Jen Sygit live at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm

**Friday, September 2**

The North Carolines are a duo that play dynamic, acoustic, Americana music. Things have been going very well for Caroline Barlow (vocals/guitar) and Kurt Westie (vocals/mandolin/guitar) as they have been ramping up their performance schedule and getting ready to record an album. Lake Ann Brewing Company. 6:30-9:30pm.

**Friday, September 2**

Stormcloud Brewing Company welcomes Manistee-based Awesome Distraction back to the stormy stage. Nick Veine and Kyle Garber have been performing together for five years and continue to impress audiences with their harmonies and musicianship. Recently the duo added vocalist Chloe Pepera, a talented 16-year-old singer. Playing a variety of cover songs with an acoustic twist, plus originals, Awesome Distraction add versatility to their performances with guitar, mandolin, banjo, ukulele, harmonica, violin, and cajon instrumentation. 8-10pm.

**Friday, September 2**

Cousin Curtiss at The Cabbage Shed. Dance, sing, and kick off Labor Day weekend with this talented guy! No cover. 9:30pm.

**Saturday, September 3**

Alfredo Improvisational Quartet at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm.

**Saturday, September 3**

Louisville-based Small Time Napoleon returns to Stormcloud Brewing Company. The jazz/pop/folk group says they are a "combination of new ideas and old sounds. Their interest in the jazz standards of the swing-era shine through in their voices, writing, and playing, while their ear for new sounds and ideas constantly drives them forward." 8-10pm.

**Saturday, September 3**

"Find Your Park" After Dark: Explore the Milky Way, Mars, and Saturn with Sleeping Bear Dunes park rangers and Bob Moler of the Grand Traverse Astronomical Society who will present a talk on the topic of "100 Years of Recognizing and Studying the Andromeda Nebula as a Galaxy." The talk will begin at 9:05pm, just after the 9pm welcome, and will last about 15 minutes. The event will be canceled if the stars are not visible due to cloudy weather conditions. Call 231-326-4700, ext. 5005, for a voicemail message with the decision. GTAstro.org. Dune Climb. 9-11pm.

**Saturday, September 3**

Too Much of a Good Thing performs at The Cabbage Shed. No cover. 9:30pm.

**Sunday, September 4**

The members of the Benzonia Township Fire Department are putting on a pancake breakfast to help raise funds for scholarships and community donations. Come to the Benzonia Public Library for all-you-can-eat breakfast of pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, coffee, milk, and orange juice! \$7 for adults; \$4 for kids (6-12); free (kids under 6). 8am-12pm.

**Sunday, September 4**

The Lake Ann Street Dance is back!! We're closing down First Street for live music from The Eric Engblade Band, Cousin Curtiss, and One Hot Robot, plus there's a silent disco tent! The Stone Oven will be open and serving, Cory's Cones has a special sundae, and we—of course—will be quenching your thirst. The bands start at 4pm, but come early at 3pm to check out a wedding in the church and start your night off right with a neighborhood toast to the happy couple! Everyone is welcome! Come celebrate beautiful Lake Ann and our friendly community. Free admission, all ages welcome, drink proceeds to benefit Lake Ann Village restoration. 4pm-12am.

**Sunday, September 4**

Traverse City-based Blake Elliott and The Robinson Affair will seduce your ears with their indie folk, rock, and blues fusion. They are known to tempt and captivate audiences with their folked up, funkied up, blues-you-away tunes. Bring your dancin' shoes! Stormcloud Brewing Company. 8-10pm.

**Sunday, September 4**

Alfredo Improvisational Quartet at The Cabbage Shed. 9:30pm.

**Monday, September 5**

Summer's End/Hey September Party on

the Stormcloud patio. It's the unofficial end to summer, so we'll tap a special Summer's End beer and fire up the BBQ for a good, old fashioned holiday cook out. We'll also open the green space next to the brewery as a beer garden so that there is plenty of room to enjoy live music from local favorite Cousin Curtiss, performing. Plus, one lucky guest will win a 2017 Cloudspotter Membership! 5-9pm.

**Monday, September 5**

Traverse City native Rachel B will share her special brand of "empowerment pop" with visitors at the Platte River Campground amphitheater, within the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Born Rachel Borovik, but better known by her stage name of "Rachel B," the singer has cited Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Corinne Bailey Rae as her inspirations. Her style has been described as pop, jazz, and soul combined. The concert is free with a park pass, which can be purchased at the Phillip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire for \$15 (per vehicle) for seven days or \$30 for an annual pass. 8-9pm.

**Wednesday, September 7**

Geno's Sport Bar & Grill of Thompsonville proudly sponsors the Friends of the Betsie Valley District Library's Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser. The following are suggested donations: \$10.00 per person over the age of 16; \$20.00 per family (2 adults, 2 children under 16) + \$5 for each additional child under 16. Beverages and tips are not included. 4-7pm.

**Saturday, September 10**

Second annual Tri-Up North Triathlon: bike, paddle, run in Frankfort, the perfect location for a triathlon! Last year was specifically geared toward beginners and those looking for a little motivation to become more active. For 2016, we're introducing the Challenger Course (Classic is 10 miles, Challenger is 22 miles), which is a competitive course for experienced athletes and relay teams. Tri-UpNorth.com. 7am.

**Sat-Monday, September 10-12**

Eat Your Yard workshop at Grow Benzie: Dive deep into ecological and edible landscaping through a three-day intensive class with Trevor Newman (Roots to Fruits Ecological Design) and Levi Meeuwenberg (Realeyes Homestead and the Edible Trails Project). You will learn how to design and plan an edible landscape, integrate annual and perennial crops, prep your site, implement your edible landscape plan, add animals to the mix, manage your landscape through time, and take these skills home to start your own landscape design. The course runs 10am-4pm daily on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Registration is required and space is limited. bit.ly/2c37AF9

**Saturday, September 10**

Benzie Audubon presents Fall Birding in Arcadia with Brian Allen, who will lead a birding trip to look for migrating sparrows, confusing fall warblers, and possible rarities. Meet at the Arcadia Dunes Grassland Preserve on Keillor Road and also check out Arcadia Marsh after the Grassland. 231-723-7056. 8am.

**Saturday, September 10**

10th annual Taste of Benzie & Beyond in downtown Frankfort. 11:30am-3:30pm.



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2nd - Cousin Curtiss @9:30PM  
3rd - Too Much Of A Good Thing @9:30PM  
4th - Alfredo @9:30PM  
8th - Open Mic Night @8PM

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Cold Creek Bridge Walk**  
on Labor Day  
Monday, September 5, 10am  
Downtown Beulah

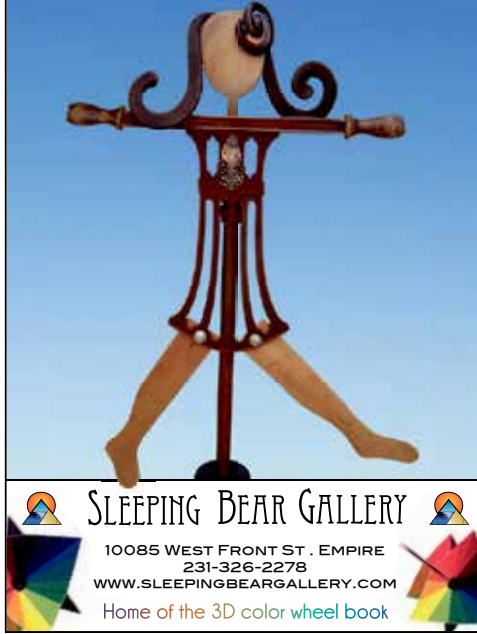
**Fall Festival**  
Saturday, October 1  
10am - 5pm  
Downtown Beulah

**Halloween**  
Monday, October 31,  
9am - 6pm  
Downtown Beulah

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## Temple

Continued from page 1

asked me. I had no clue. We advanced hypotheses. Looks like a southwestern Indian kiva, I said. Chris suggested a solstice connection, with the two entrances—modern druids? “Solar?” said Jimmy. The open construction seemed to rule out a sauna, even with a possible canvas roof. I was reminded of the sculptor Martin Puryear, who builds big forms of bent wood.

I asked Chris to let me keep the photos, so that I could show them around to other locals that I knew. At first, nobody that I spoke with recognized the place, though plenty had guesses.

## Asking Around

My husband suggested perhaps an abandoned movie set. Someone else suggested an amphitheater; performance in the round. One called it a yurt. Someone said, “Art? Maybe the start of another art park, like at Crystal



An aging temple turns gray. Left photo taken in 2001 by Steven Schauer; right photo taken in 2016 by Beau Vallance.

sculptors.)

## Answers Found

All of these conjectures about the place are precisely what Joe and his friends had hoped for when they built The Temple over the summers of 2000 and 2001. Finding The Temple and wondering about it were “exactly what we meant,” Joe told me. I read him the list of possible interpretations that I had amassed over the past few weeks, to which he responded, “This is kinda great!”

Joe explained that The Temple is an “architectural sculpture,” a reference to primitive huts and to the “self-explanatory construction techniques of old cottages, made of 2x4s and siding.” It is a celebration of Joe’s love of these woods, and a “portrait” record of his evolving design decisions; The Temple project allowed Joe and his friends to find a way to reflect a “soulful connection to the land”—but “not too literally.”

It is not a chapel, not a monument. The Temple has no practical purpose, refers to no specific faith traditions, and Joe is not aware of



Mountain?”

On an errand at Benzie Appliance in Benzonia, I showed the photos to Al behind the counter. He puzzled over them, suggesting a connection to the old ski slope in Elberta that had closed around the same time as the one at Chimney Corners did, around the 1950s. I asked the next customer. She said, “Readers’ theater?” which prompted Al to say “Yes! Poetry slam! Stone Circle annex?”

Two volunteers at the Benzie Area Historical Museum gave me Andy Bolander’s contact information. Andy did not know the structure but sent information from Allen Blacklock’s *History of Elberta*: rough shacks built by generations of Elberta-area boys since the 1880s were called (for unknown reasons) “Black Bugs.” These were six-foot-deep holes, with ladders down, roofed with poles and evergreens. Later models used salvaged lumber, and “each succeeding generation built their own, using the salvage from those before them.”

Was this modern structure a reference to these old Black Bug traditions?

My friend Louise, looking at the photos over lunch at Conundrum Café in Elberta, noted the high-quality construction details. Conundrum’s owners, Michelle and Rob, mentioned those old ski huts behind Elberta, or maybe it was an unfinished séance site? (They ruled out the “hermit lady” in those woods as the potential builder: she built her hut with stones, they told me.)

Ultimately, it was Jim “Bubby” Grabowski—owner of Bear Lake-based Upland Meadows Landscaping and Frankfort’s “tree guy”—who led me to the real answers. Jim was doing work at my friend Jill’s place near Upper Herring Lake, and she thought he would know.

Seeing the photos, he instantly said, “Yes! That’s The Temple! My brother owned that land.” Temple? A religious purpose? “No, it was just a thing to build, by some guys... it’s always been called The Temple.”

He named “the guys,” and I knew (slightly) the parents of one of them; this led me not to their son but to Adam Burks, now a boat builder in Traverse City. Adam sent me to Joe Sturges, a landscape designer in Los Angeles, who has spent a lifetime of summers at a small cottage in the Congregational Summer Assembly (CSA).

I phoned Joe; he had the story. (And, notably, Martin Puryear is one of his favorite

“events” that have ever happened there. But it has symbolic meanings; it “has its complexities.” For instance, the open entrances welcome you into an unfamiliar forest space made of wood, just to be there. The clean geometry of the cement ring in the center—built first—makes an axis with the open circle in the roof, connecting earth and sky.

The original plan evolved from a box to something that obscures this geometry with a “more interesting and complex” shape, wrapping this core like two huge clasped hands. The external buttresses (suggesting trees) and the high independent squared frame are holdovers from earlier designs; the square reflects the original box idea. The roof once had a seasonal fabric canopy, referencing a tree. The center circle was always open to the sky, but it is only coincidence that the seam in the concrete ring indicates North!

Envisioned in 1997, The Temple was built mostly during the summer of 2001 by Joe, Adam, and other friends, with funding (thousands of dollars) from a nonprofit, “Endowment for Experiential Architecture,” started by Joe with several supporters. The Temple is not regularly “maintained” and is quietly falling into ruin, but there is no vandalism, and Joe clears out leaves and treefall every summer.

## Finding The Temple

It took me three tries to find The Temple for myself. It was thrilling. I sat there, alone, hearing only tall trees creaking and imagining people discovering the place for themselves and being amazed. Joe wrote, after our phone conversation, “I like that you’ve come to it through word of mouth, passed down through different people.”

Jimmy, Mr. Joy’s son whose discovery had started my quest, grinned when I told him what all my searching had surmised. He said, “So it has no purpose? Just to drive people crazy with questions? That’s great!”

*Editor’s Note: We are purposefully not disclosing the exact location of The Temple, so that people can continue to just happen upon it and wonder, as intended by its creators. If you find The Temple, enter it and enjoy. If you bring others to it, let them have questions, too. But protect it. Let it be.*

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# Stray Cats

Continued from page 1

out of a true sense of compassion, which unwittingly adds to the feral population and compounds the problem. One single female cat and her offspring can be responsible for creating more than 370,000 kittens over a span of seven years, according to SpayNeuter.org.

Since trapping individual cats for euthanization does nothing to curb the overall colony population, what does?

Studies are showing the positive impact of Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) programs. Community Cats of Benzie County

tantly—not reproducing. And whenever the two males still at large at Lower Herring Lake are taken in, that entire colony will be considered healthy and contained.

Learnihan and Stevens are financially able to provide the food for their colony, but there is help available through the nonprofit for those who wish to supervise a colony but need financial assistance to do so.

### Volunteers and Funding Needed

Through her work over the years with this issue, McKee had foreseen both the need for volunteers and the financial assistance to support them. Thus the new nonprofit was born.

“I started doing outreach with my own funds and volunteering my time to spay and neuter the feral cat colonies in this

county four summers ago,” McKee says. “After spending three years doing this, I saw that the need was great enough to combine efforts with others. With the encouragement of Animal Control Officer Jaime Croel, I felt that, if a 501(c)3 were formed, people could donate for supplies and I could find volunteers, so we could help the in-

creasing numbers of cats [that we have in this county].”

In May of this year, CCBC obtained its nonprofit status. The organization works closely with the Benzie County Animal Shelter, which refers calls about outdoor and stray cats (called “community cats” by the nonprofit) to CCBC. The nonprofit also takes calls directly from individual residents.

“The TNR programs work because they are done in a systematic way,” McKee says. “Though TNR is the main focus of our work, we also must emphasize education—we want people to *not* feed stray cats unless they have been sexually altered. And we want to emphasize to people how important it is to spay and neuter their own cats—particularly those who are indoor/outdoor cats.”

After only three months as a certified nonprofit, CCBC is responsible for the spaying and neutering of 85 cats, in addition to 25 socialized kittens and cats that have been placed in private homes. With this momentum and community backing, CCBC is well on its way to the goal of decreasing and eliminating cat homelessness in Benzie County.

How can you help? CCBC needs volunteers to care for cat colonies, help with fundraising, provide foster homes, and help with trapping and transporting, as well as donations of food, unused dog houses, building materials, and time to build cat shelters.

*For more information on how to volunteer or to report cats in need, call 231-383-3639. Donations can be made online at BenzieCats.org, or mailed to: Community Cats of Benzie County, P.O. Box 343, Frankfort, Michigan, 49635.*

## Trap, Neuter, Return

What does humane intervention of CCBC look like?

- **Volunteers agree to oversee and care for their immediate feral cat colony, including the TNR—which also includes medical exams, appropriate vaccinations and treatments, ear-tipping for future identification, and assessment of socialization potential. These volunteers also provide fresh water and food, as well as adequate shelter against the elements, and they monitor for any developing medical needs.**
- **Volunteers provide foster homes for adoptable kittens and cats.**
- **Interested persons can make donations of canned and dry cat food, as well as dog houses and building materials for cat shelters**
- **Volunteers donate time for building shelters.**
- **Interested persons can make monetary donations to help cover medical care for the cats.**

(CCBC), a brand new nonprofit organization, is Benzie County’s first TNR program. The TNR platform combines several components, all working toward the end goal of decreasing the number of homeless cats through humane intervention. Cats are trapped, taken in to be neutered or spayed, and then returned “to the wild.”

### Example As Proof

Connie Learnihan and Kevin Stevens are two good-hearted souls who began leaving food out for the feral cats near their Lower Herring summer residence last fall. In particular, they became attached to a pretty female kitty.

“As the season progressed, we started calling her ‘April,’” Learnihan says. “Because we hoped she would still be around the following April, when we came back.”

When they did return this spring after wintering at their home in Frankfort, the couple did not see April for a while. When they finally did, they were shocked to see how thin and unhealthy she looked.

“Then we saw three kittens with her and knew she’d been trying to survive and keep them fed,” Learnihan says. A neighbor had heard that there was a new nonprofit which might be able to help, and she gave Learnihan the contact information for CCBC.

Fast-forwarding to today, Learnihan and Stevens are now TNR colony supervisors for CCBC: this means that they oversee and care for the feral cat colony in their immediate location. In addition to facilitating medical care and monitoring medical needs, colony supervisors also provide food, water, and shelter.

Learnihan and Stevens had April and one of her kittens, Sammy, taken in for TNR, and they have since been relocated to the couple’s home in Frankfort. Since the couple already had three indoor cats, April and Sammy remain barn cats but are healthy, monitored, and—most impor-

# Lynn & Perin

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## Finding the 2017 Annual Park Pass Design

Sleeping Bear Dunes holds kids' artwork contest

*From Staff Reports*

Every year, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore sells more than 11,000 annual park entrance passes through the fee-collection stations that are located throughout the Park. The pass provides free entry for the pass holder and occupants of a single, private, non-commercial vehicle. If entry is by foot, bicycle, or by an organized group that is not part of a commercial tour, the pass admits the pass holder and three adults who are 16 years of age or older. (Children under 16 are admitted free.)

Once again, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is conducting an artwork contest to select an image for the front of the 2017 Annual Park Entrance Pass. The focus of the contest centers around the Every Kid in a Park program, which has the central goal of connecting fourth graders with the great outdoors and inspiring them to become future environmental stewards, ready to preserve and protect national parks and other public lands for years to come. For this reason, the art contest is open to anyone who is 12 years of age or younger.

The contest rules include:

- One entry is allowed per child, and all artwork must be completed by the child.
- The child should draw or paint a picture that reminds him or her of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. If the child visited the Park, what experiences did he or she have while enjoying the Park? What does the child like most about Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore?
- The child should use the template that is available on the Park's website (NPS.gov/SLBE) as the canvas for completing his or her artwork. (The final pass will be much smaller—about credit card size—so the winning artwork will be scaled down to fit the available space.)
- Artwork may be completed by using colored pencils, paints, crayons, markers, pastels, etc. or by simply creating a pen-and-ink drawing.
- Once completed, print the child's name and age in the space on the template, and have the parent/guardian sign his or her name and provide an email address.
- The original artwork—along with the cover page—must be sent flat by mail or be hand-delivered to the Park at the

following address: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Attn: Artwork Contest, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630. Entries must be received at the Park no later than October 31, 2016.

- Contest entries will be evaluated on originality, creativity, and quality. Impartial members of the Park staff will choose the winning design.
- Children of employees of the National Lakeshore or its partners may participate. Entries will be kept anonymous from the judges.

All artwork submitted will become the property of the National Park Service for use in web and print publications for the National Lakeshore.

The winner will be announced by mid-November. Prizes for the winning artwork and the runner-up will be provided by Eastern National, which partners with the National Lakeshore to operate three bookstores in Sleeping Bear. The winner will also receive a 2017 Annual Park Entrance Pass.

For questions or more information, please contact Paul Purifoy, revenue and fee business manager, at 231-326-4730.



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## “Find Your Park” After Dark

Enjoy celestial centennial at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

*From Staff Reports*

The sky is the limit at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Explore the Milky Way, Mars, and Saturn with park rangers and astronomers at the Dune Climb parking lot on Saturday, September 3, from 9-11 p.m. Experience the late summer night sky in near total darkness.

During the event, Grand Traverse Astronomical Society (GTAS) astronomer Bob Moler will present a talk on the topic of “100 Years of Recognizing and Studying the Andromeda Nebula as a Galaxy.”

The talk will begin at 9:05 p.m., just after the 9 p.m. welcome, and will last about 15 minutes. Visitors are asked to park in the row farthest from the dunes, with headlights facing M-109.

All sky programs offered by the National Lakeshore are free. Participants need only purchase the Park Entrance Pass or have an Annual Pass displayed in their vehicle to join in the fun. Passes may be purchased at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire and cost \$15 per vehicle for seven days.

Visitors are encouraged to bring a flashlight for the walk back to their cars and should bring bug spray, if desired. Visitors may also want to bring binoculars, beach chairs, blankets, and water.

This year marks the 100th birthday for the National Park Service. As part of its year-long centennial celebration, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (which itself was founded in the 1970s) has planned a variety of recreational and cultural events to encourage the public to explore and enjoy the National Park. In particular, the #findyourpark social media campaign aims to introduce a new generation of Americans to their Park.

The September star-gazing party is the perfect opportunity to “Find Your Park” in the stars. Starry night skies and natural darkness are important components of the special places that the National Park Service

protects. National parks hold some of the last remaining harbors of darkness, providing an excellent opportunity to experience this endangered resource.

*The event will be cancelled if the stars are not visible due to cloudy weather conditions. The decision to cancel will be made two hours in advance of the event; please call 231-326-4700, ext. 5005, for a voicemail message with the decision. For a listing of future star parties and other programs, check the Park's event calendar at [NPS.gov/SLBE/PlanYourVisit/Calendar.htm](http://NPS.gov/SLBE/PlanYourVisit/Calendar.htm). For more information about the GTAS, visit [GTAS.org](http://GTAS.org).*

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Explore the Milky Way, Mars, and Saturn with park rangers and astronomers at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore star-gazing party on Saturday, September 3. Photo courtesy of the National Park.



# Iron Fish

Continued from page 1

we thought it would be more fascinating to do it from scratch. This is the way it used to be done. Distilling was a farm trade. The consequence of that decision is that we are Michigan's first farm-based distillery."

## Poetic Launch

Richard, Sarah, David, and Heidi broke ground with the distillery last September 21, which means the construction project was ready in less than 12 months, a lightning pace. Their new friend Michael Delp—poet, former professor at Interlochen Arts Academy, avid fisherman, and whiskey connoisseur—read his poem "Steelhead Dreams" at the groundbreaking. Delp's lyrical words, and his own lifelong fight to swim against the current (notably not *The Current*), seemed appropriate, given the distillery's name of Iron Fish. How did the name come about?

"It was hard to find a name for the business that we could trademark," Wallace explains. "At some point, we settled on the name of a fish. The iron fish is a steelhead salmon that runs up the Betsie River."

Wallace also fancied the name, because his hobby is metal artwork—the metal fish logo behind the bar at the distillery is his creation.

"You could actually substitute 'whiskey' for 'steelhead' in terms of the spirit and nature of the fish," Wallace goes on. "Catching a steelhead is the epitome of catching a fish. They are prehistoric and beautiful." Like fine, aged scotch.

There is another parallel between the iron fish steelhead and the founders of the distillery: sisters Sarah Anderson and Heidi Bolger spent summers in Benzie County visiting their aunt Beulah, who was a fixture in the community. Beulah boasted a deep history here; she was involved in founding the Animal Welfare League of Benzie County, and she ran the Benzie County Chamber of Commerce for a time, in addition to working for the Ann Arbor Railroad for decades.

Like steelhead salmon swimming back upstream to their native waters to reproduce, the sisters returned home to Benzie County to launch the distillery with their husbands.

## Local Connection

All fall and winter, hunters, horseback riders, and snowmobilers would come down Dzuibanek Road to visit the distillery-in-progress and inquire what was happening at this 19th-century farmstead where the Chamberlain family had once lived.

According to Richard Anderson, George Chamberlain purchased the land from the state in the late 1880s and passed it on to his son, Victor, who lived there with his wife, Martha, until they died in the early 1990s. The farm was subsequently abandoned, and the fields went fallow. Victor's nieces sold the farm to David Wallace and Heidi Bolger five years ago.

"The people who have stopped here to visit us all have a story to tell," Richard says. "They are rooted here. They all knew the Chamberlains. We hope to build a connection with them and become their distillery."

One such story came on a snowy day early this year, when a Benzie County Road Commission snowplow driver stopped by and told Richard that he had once been the caretaker of the farm. This meant that he had fought to keep vandals and squatters out of the old farmhouse, which had sat empty for 20 years. The driver pointed to a small barn, which was stuffed with hay, and asked Richard, "Did you know that Victor kept an illegal still during and just after Prohibition. Look around. You might find it in the attic."

The still could not be found (it may have been used for scrap metal), but the new owners did find Victor's old wooden hammermill, which he used to grind flour and make spirits. The owners plan to restore the artifact and run grain through it—an homage to Victor Chamberlain.

Another day brought a visit from a regulator with the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, a regulator whose grandfather had been the sheriff

of a neighboring county and thus was tasked with confiscating illegal stills from area farms.

Salt-of-the-earth locals and Crystal Mountain homeowners, too, have been curious about the upscale new distillery. Last October 17, during halftime of the historic Michigan vs. Michigan State gridiron match—the one that ended with a Wolverine fumble giving the Spartans a desperate, last-second, 27-23 victory—a team of hunters wearing green camouflage piled out of a four-door pickup with a Michigan State license tag to see what was being built. One of them asked Richard if Iron Fish Distillery would have a television.

"Hell ya!" said Richard, an MSU graduate, himself. "If you do," the hunter responded, "we Spartan fans will fill this place up."

Distillery tasting rooms—particularly those in Scotland—typically do not have a TV.

"But that connection with the community is important for us," Richard says. "We'll even accept some U of M folks in here." (This journalist and Michigan alum breathes a sigh of relief.)

"The whole idea of this is an agricultural destination for all," he adds.

Richard's wife, Sarah, chimes in with a laugh: "We'll have bike parking, car parking, tractor parking, snowmobile parking, even horse parking here."

## Deep-Water Source

Iron Fish's distiller is Dan Krolczyk, a wine-maker, brewer, and distiller who has logged thousands of hours of spirit-making. Krolczyk, whose family owns a farm in Mason County, has a winemaking certificate from the University of California Davis, has made wines for six years

has a substantial impact on the water table and aquifer near the farm. Nevertheless, they are in the process of gathering exact data to measure their water footprint, which the owners feel that people have a right to see and understand.

Moreover, the farm aspect of the business—which is run by farm manager Dylan McGee—is a Michigan Environmentally Assured Farm, meaning that they "keep their land, water, and air as healthy as the food they produce, [representing] the highest quality of environmental stewardship and the pinnacle of responsible agriculture." Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) farms are required to go through a rigorous review by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development every three years to ensure that they are in compliance.

The farm harvested its first crop of wheat on July 26, thanks in large part to a neighbor with "some ginormous, super techie equipment." (The wheat will later be used to make vodka and whiskey.)

"The highlight of working here is that the owners and staff are such an eclectic group," Krolczyk says. "Everyone brings different skills and personalities, and everyone feeds off one another. It's knowing you're working with a fantastic team, and—in the end—there will be a fantastic, locally made product."

On Labor Day weekend, Iron Fish Distillery will open with its own rum. Shortly thereafter, they will serve vodka and short-order gin that includes botanicals harvested from the Betsie River region. Krolczyk plans to begin making his whiskeys this fall, and the distillery should have them ready 18 months later.

Whenever possible, Michigan products are used in the spirits. The wheat in the current vodka batch is from the Send Brothers Farm in Williamsburg. The molasses is also from the mitten state. Iron Fish plans to buy all herbs, fruits, and vegetables from local farms, such as Ware Farm of Bear Lake and King Orchards of Central Lake. They even hope to make applejack from local ingredients.

Iron Fish also plans to partner with other regional farms on pristine riversheds, such as one in the Upper Peninsula that will deliver 6,000 pounds of rye in return for a whiskey that Krolczyk plans to make which will be called Chocoley River Rye.

"We're super focused on partnerships with farms that are environmentally managed to protect watersheds," Richard says.

It seems fitting that this distillery's mission is so focused on water, given its namesake.

## Outdoor Seating and Weddings

The 119-acre property is home to an old barn and a new 4,900-square-foot building, including more than 25 major pieces of equipment.

The byproduct of ethanol produced to make spirits is methanol, which Iron Fish will use to fuel heat lamps so that customers can sit outdoors for all 12 months of the year. The tasting room can accommodate approximately 50 people, but another 120 can sip spirits outside, while sitting by a fire pit. The distillery hopes to remain open seven days a week throughout most of the year.

Iron Fish will also host weddings, family reunions, and other events. The nearby barn can be rented for special occasions, even as the distillery tasting room remains open to the public.

The four entrepreneurs hope to sell their spirits to wholesale customers far and wide. But the tasting room is important, too.

"We want to make an impression at this location," Sarah Anderson says. "We want people to experience our product in this beautiful setting."

*Iron Fish Distillery is located at 14234 Dzuibanek Road, which is five miles southwest of downtown Thompsonville. Call them at 231-378-3474, or find them on the web at IronFishDistillery.com.*

## STEELHEAD DREAMS

By Michael Delp

Tonight, just before I fall asleep, I hear the wind kick up in the red pines outside the house. I begin to go under, begin to submerge myself in a dream I know is waiting for me. "The steelhead run with the wind," I remember someone saying. And I think of thousands of fish gathering at the mouths of rivers up and down Lake Michigan. I begin to think of my bed and how I lie on top of it as some way I am able to hover just over the dream. As if the dream itself were made of water and I could lower myself down into a river choked with March ice. Holding. Just off a river mouth.

I listen. Underwater the wind sounds like thousands of waterfalls. A dull roar. A roar coming from far off and seeping gradually into my head. There are hundreds of fish waiting. They fan slowly, move up and down, some sideways in the current coming out of the river.

If I listen clearly enough to the inside of my head, I can hear the sound of some old command, some old memory let loose far upstream calling me in.

The water turns chemical. Chemicals loose in the tiny brains of these fish washing through their bodies, urging them up river.

They surge through deadfall, upstream, rounding bends deep underwater, the sound of the river mixing with the sound of wind. All chemical. Something drifting now in their bodies. Bodies that look like pure aluminum muscles loose in the water.

for L. Mawby Winery near Suttons Bay, and has worked for both North Peak Brewing Company and Grand Traverse Distillery in Traverse City. He has lived in Northern Michigan since 2004.

"When you are distilling, you're making a beer but not the way you'd want it to taste if you were going to go sit at a bar," Krolczyk explains above the rhythmic sound of more grain being pumped into the tanks.

The Iron Fish process goes something like this: take grain from the property, add it to water that is also from the property, heat it up, then cool it down, convert the starches from the grain to sugar, and put it in the fermenter, then the whole mash in the still. Then go through the process of removing the water that you added in the first place. (It is ironic, because you had this big batch and then, at the end, you come out with a small amount of high-proof alcohol, to which you ultimately add water again.)

The water that Iron Fish Distillery uses is from an aquifer that connects to the nearby Betsie River. Richard believes this is also Michigan's first distillery to use a deep-water well.

Krolczyk recycles the water that he uses from batch to batch of spirit production, and the Iron Fish team does not believe that their production




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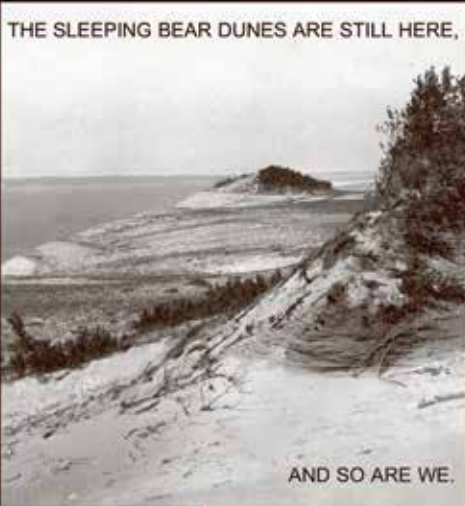
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# History of Benzie Dive Bars—Part 1

The evolution, and sometimes demise, of beloved local establishments in Elberta, Frankfort, and Beulah

By Susan Koenig

## Current Contributor

What, exactly, is a “dive bar,” and do we have any in Benzie County? According to Google, a dive bar refers to “anything from a comfortable, but basic neighborhood pub to the nastiest swill-slinging hole” or “an informal bar or pub, a neighborhood bar” or “something that requires a person to dive into a subculture”—*I don't know if you wanna go there, that bar is kind of divey...* You know the adjectives: sketchy, shady, dicey, dangerous, disreputable.

Even the *Huffington Post* weighs in on the subject, perhaps as a slight dig to the pretentious among us:

*It isn't a dive bar if:*

1. It's called 'the dive bar.'
2. They check your ID.
3. They have a wine list with more choices than "red and white."
4. Wifi is free and people are actually using it.
5. They serve cocktails that contain "fresh" items such as cucumbers.
6. They have bathrooms that actually lock and have ample toilet paper.
7. They charge more than \$3 for a can of PBR.

Can you think of any local, Benzie County place that fits these descriptions? No? Well, neither can I, at least not nowadays, and since no bar owner wants to be identified as sleazy or divey, I will have to delve into my own past, to when I first arrived in Benzie, as well as relying on hearsay from people who lived here “back in the day.” But the number of people who fit in that category—and who also know the definition of a dive bar—are dwindling.

Most longtime residents remember each bar/restaurant—regardless of whether it is/was a dive or not—by its particular owner, what the ambiance was, who went there, what crazy thing happened, what kind of food: Wally's perch, Chuck's burgers, The Ten Pin's pizzas, Mary's stuffed cabbage rolls, and, of late, edamame at the Laughing Horse Saloon, hummus at the Cold Creek Inn, or lamp at the Frankfort Hotel. Since these places were very “local,” none were intimidating, as a real dive might be, unless perhaps you were a stranger passing through. (A real dive, by the way, does not serve food).

### Elberta, Then and Now

Saloons, now an old-fashioned term, were once the name of the game, describing—especially in the 19th-century Midwestern and Western United States—places used exclusively for the consumption of alcoholic beverages, perhaps also known as tap or ale houses, gin mills, and, later, simply pubs or bars. Derived from the French ‘salon’ or living room, saloons sometimes had a separate area with tables and chairs for ladies to imbibe delicately and separately from the bar.

From Allen Blacklock's *History of Elberta*: “The saloon days were wild days, and bartenders were judged by their ability to maintain order... [Several proprietors in Elberta] had the reputation of being able to run their establishment and [they] were not slow to prove it if their ability was questioned, which it often was.”

After Prohibition was voted out and the Red Ribbon Society (Temperance Union) of Elberta lost its clout, The Mayfair Tavern was opened by Charles W. Luxford and dominated pub life in Elberta. This was about 1933, and it was “just a bar,” frequented by the car ferry employees and local residents. Food was not provided, nor was anyone interested in dining. After Charles W., Gene “Peasoup” Luxford took over, and he owned The Mayfair until his death in 1952. (Notably, the place was called “Peasoup's” during this time more often than it was referenced by its actual name.) Everett “Ted” Peterson was

the next proprietor, until 1962, when he sold it back to the Luxford family, this time to Charles W's grandson, Charles Lewis Luxford, who went by “Chuck.”

It was still “just a bar,” but this time with bands and musicians like Ray Nye, Norm Tooley, and Ron Stoops (who were also playing at The Ten Pin in Beulah and the Villa Marine Bar across the bay in Frankfort). Food was not elaborate, but The Mayfair had little slide-out grills for burgers, which became quite famous.

dropping a brick from the second floor onto By's head! By survived, and no one went to jail—a happy outcome, overall.

Baker's Bar later became Dinghy's and has certainly evolved over the years—under the current ownership of Steve Christian, it is always packed with diners, but the bar closes early.

Now consider the Villa, a popular eatery and drinkery overlooking Betsie Bay with music, a full menu, and a wine list that goes far beyond just “red and white.” The Villa is older than



Benzie Central's Class of 2004 high school reunion is among the lively late-night crowd at the Villa Marine Bar. Photo courtesy of Aubrey Ann Parker.

The popular Chuck and Imogene sold the establishment in 2000 to Wally Palmer, but the couple's daughter, Kelly Luxford, continues to cheerfully tend bar there. Wally Palmer kept things pretty much the same, for the most part, adding a popular fish fry on Friday nights, but the dive bar days were over.

“In the '70s,” Kelly Luxford opines, “things started to change, with the arrival of food services, such as Gordon's, and tourists demanding more than just booze.”

After about 10 years, Wally Palmer sold to Jim Goldman and Heather Hanley, who, in turn, sold to the current owners, sisters Jen and Katie Condon. Nowadays, The Mayfair is definitely more of a restaurant, despite its small but cozy bar.

During the '80s, The Cabbage Shed opened down the road and became known for good food and music, plus a more active late-night scene; but it was too cool to be called a dive.

### Frankfort, Then and Now

Meanwhile, across the bay in Frankfort, there were three bars that catered to the car ferry employees, and all date back to the '30s and '40s: the Pac Inn (now Frankfort Hotel), Baker's Bar (Dinghy's), and the Villa Marine Bar. By 1970, The Seven Spot (now Stormcloud) had moved to the more modern Frontenac, a bar/restaurant/bowling alley that was built more or less on the former site of the elegant Hotel Royal Frontenac (now the Harbor Lights Condominiums).

While The Seven Spot and the Pac Inn were never in the dive bar category, they were very popular and respectable watering holes, more of the cocktail variety. Many fondly recall the particular bartending skills of George Waters and Sherman Blood. Those were the “real” martini days—no cucumbers or blue cheese-stuffed olives, thank you, and gin, not vodka.

Byron (“By”) Baker's bar is also legendary. Patrons came off the ferries from the night shift and headed to the bars at 7 a.m. Food was not part of that scene. One of my friends recalls drinking in Baker's while underage, and she remembers the bathroom sink being decidedly... slanty. At first, she thought it was her youthful beer consumption, but she soon realized that it really was at a distinct angle. Another recollection is of a disgruntled employee or patron

Baker's, and under its current ownership, it is kid friendly. There is often a line to get in for dinner, and it still enjoys a lively late-night crowd.

I spoke with 83-year-old Joyce Kirchoff, who owned the bar from May 1958 until the late '80s. Joyce tended bar and opened every day, like Baker's, at 7 a.m. to accommodate the car ferry crews. Joyce says that she was the first tavern owner to introduce food—sandwiches and pizzas—which was served until the wee hours. In the '80s, she and her husband remodeled the place and put in an actual kitchen, not an easy task, since the building was formerly a car dealership. Joyce says that her clientele is “all gone now,” and she “loved them all.” The ferry guys used to sit at the bar, drinking, gossiping, exchanging stories, and enjoying the 25-cent glasses of beer or “a shot and a mix.”

Joyce saw a big change when the drinking age was lowered to 18 back in 1972. The young people played the jukebox and the older people fled, preferring the country music bands that performed there on Friday and Saturday nights. There were no tourists then.

I asked if there were fights. “Maybe a push and a shove, but it got worse as the years rolled on,” Joyce says, noting that the couple finally sold in 1989. It was once the “gayest place in town,” she adds. “Gay” in the old-fashioned sense.”

### Beulah, Then and Now

In 1972, my first foray into the bar scene of Benzie County, the public social life seemed not too auspicious, but what did I know? (No one, and nothing.) I first gravitated to Beulah, my postal address. There was the former Sells Hotel (dive bar with rooms) before my time. This hotel, now the Cold Creek Inn, thrived during the '40s, serving food and drink to locals, separating the bar from the restaurant, which was customary back then. “Doc” Norman and Bill Scott bought the business, catering to locals as a “working person's bar.” I thought it was pretty divey back then, but they sold to Bernie Cook, who apparently prided himself on home cooking (thanks to June Deering), and the bar became essentially a restaurant.

Bernie Cook sold to Gene and Patty Quick, who made major renovations to the building in the '70s and then sold to Zee and Diesel

Cantrell, who sold to the York brothers. The Yorks ran it from 1995 to 2005. (Ken “Yorkie” York now owns Yorkies Trading Post on Vondra near Thompsonville—relocations abound in Benzie County, but no one seems to go very far away.) After 11 years, the business came back to the Cantrells and remains in their family with Zoily “Z” Amenson at the helm. After high school in her native Ecuador, Z travelled to California where she met Jim “Diesel” Cantrell while in college. The two relocated to Michigan (where he worked for Diesel in Detroit, hence the nickname), raised their five children, and eventually fell in love with Benzie County. Z, of vivid imagination, says that Beulah reminded her of Acapulco Bay.

After various incarnations, the Cold Creek Inn is now an always-full hotel with an evolving atypical menu. But local resident Mary Pitcher—now bartender/manager of the upscale Cru in Frankfort—recalls fondly her youthful bartending experience in Beulah: “Coming from the north side of Muskegon, an all-white, zero-diversity enclave, attending the University of Michigan in the 1980s, I didn’t know anything about bar life. For me, working at the Cold Creek was a great life experience. There’s so much cool history in the bar scene.” She goes on to describe a biker club named “Broadjumpers” (true) that used to frequent the bar.

“I think the leader of the pack had several aliases,” she says. “But when he visited The Creek, he was a perfect gentleman at all times. ‘Stick’ [Rick Kranz was the other bartender at that time] and I worked long hours but had a great time hearing and seeing some amazing stories and hijinks.”

Gene and Patty Quick, who had already purchased the Hungry Tummy (formerly the A&P) and the movie theater next door, were the owners of the Cold Creek Inn back then. After Gene’s death, Patty and her son, Tim, opened the Hungry Tummy Corner Pub, which might have been a dive bar for a short while, as it was the last smoking holdout before the state ban. Now various crowds attend. The daytime crowd—some tourists and people who drink early and often—move over for people who come in at the end of the workday, then more diners, and finally the late-night (usually younger) crowd. You can still play pool, the jukebox is excellent, and the food from next door is delicious. Not at all scary; just a fun neighborhood bar.

The Ten Pin across the street was a major hangout. The building was constructed at the end of the 19th century, and you can still see the outlines of the livery stable and later car-repair business that it was until World War II, when it was outfitted as a bowling alley by Justice Smith. In the early ’50s, Clayton Lanning opened the bar, which was separated from the bowling lanes by a wall, thus there were two entrances. Thomas Wright from Flint bought the business, then in 1956 sold to the Gary family, who added a soda shop to the south end. In 1957, the Garys bought the liquor license and ran all three businesses, eventually erecting a blue canopy (“the blue room”) out front where they painted the sidewalk blue!

Subsequently they replaced the dairy bar with a restaurant, then added another bar. These were the days of bowling and pitchers of beer, a dance floor with live bands, especially that same local band of Stoops, Tooley, and Nye mentioned above as having played at The Mayfair. One aficionado fondly recalls driving his snowmobile through the front door of the Ten Pin on the night of his own bachelor party. Two subsequent owners later, as bowling’s popularity faded, the alleys shut down, and after several years of disrepair, the roof caved in.

*Look for Part II of this series in our next issue: “A Walk on the Wild Side” will include bikers, strippers, and the Dead Dog Bar, an ode to winning and dining in Honor and Thompsonville. The author would like to thank all of the various people interviewed, as well as those not specifically noted (Marsha and Harold Case, Jane and Dick Gary, Kelly Luxford), for their time and invaluable insights on county life, even though most of it had to be ‘off the record.’*

# Long-Standing Farmers’ Market

## Marvin’s Garden Doubles Up to Help Community

By Rhiannon Hildenbrandt

### Current Contributor

Marvin’s Garden Spot is a long-standing local farmers’ market and favorite place to buy produce for many Benzie County residents. The family-run business on US-31, between Honor and Interlochen, is also just minutes away from Lake Ann. Owners Marvin and Marcia Blackford put a great deal of effort into growing quality produce for their faithful customers; they also source from local farms. The couple has been providing healthy, fresh food to the community since the 1970s, and Marvin’s Garden Spot continues to flourish today.

Shopping at Marvin’s Garden Spot is about more than just buying produce, though. Having a daughter and a grandson both with special needs has given the Blackfords a strong passion for providing a welcoming environment to anyone who walks in the door. The Blackfords want everyone to feel at home—you can feel that energy when you shop there. The produce hub stays very busy during the summer and fall, in large part because the couple strives to provide locals with healthy food at an affordable price.

“A lot of our customers feel like they are our family,” Marcia says with a smile. The customers are not the only ones who feel this way; the non-related employees I encountered during our interview were very close to them, as well.

### Doubling Up

The family is clearly passionate about providing a great product, but their love of the people they serve is truly remarkable.

The Blackfords started out small. Facing poverty in the ’70s, they set up a vegetable stand at the end of their driveway which was meant to help them survive. With the support of friends and family, their business grew to what it is today. Now, the Blackfords are finding ways to help others in need. Marvin’s Garden Spot participates in several programs that help families and individuals with lower incomes to eat healthy, fresh food.

“Small businesses need to do as much as we can for locals,” Marcia says, noting that a great deal of time and effort goes into her involvement with the Double Up Food Bucks program.

In Michigan, the Bridge Card (or Michigan EBT Card) is used for both Food Stamps (FAP) and cash-benefit programs. Families that qualify can apply for and receive a card for use with either of these programs. The card works just like a debit card for qualified purchases.

Double Up Food Bucks is a program that is funded by grants and fundraisers through Fair Food Network, an Ann Arbor-based nonprofit organization. The way that it works at Marvin’s: buy any SNAP-eligible foods with your Bridge Card dollars. For every two dollars that you spend on fresh, Michigan produce, you get two additional dollars (in the form of a token) to spend on non-processed, Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables—up to \$20 every day! You can choose to use the tokens right away or save them for later on.

The “Double Up” name comes from the fact that you essentially get to double your budget if you are buying local fruits and vegetables. Doubling the value of food stamps and creating more business for local growers is a powerful thing—the beauty of this program is that it not only helps people in need, but it also supports local farmers, like the Blackfords. Again, a “doubling” effect on the economy!

Marcia explains that, while the Fair Food Network tries to spread the word about the revolutionary program, the nonprofit’s budget leaves limited resources for advertising. So she tries to spread the message that Marvin’s Garden Spot is the only seven-day-a-week business in the immediate area that participates in Double Up Food Bucks, though the Elberta Farmers’ Market and Grow Benzie Farmers’ Market of Benzie County also participate once a week, as do the farmers’ markets of Empire, Glen Arbor, Lake Leelanau, Leland, Manistee, Northport, Suttons Bay, and the Sara Hardy in Traverse City. (Tom’s Food Markets of

Interlochen and South Division Street om Traverse City also participate.)

### Personal Experience

As a single mother myself, my son and I benefited greatly from the Double Up program during my time on food assistance. Doubling the value of my purchases made a huge difference in how much fresh produce we were able to buy. Doing so helped me to instill a love of eating healthy in my son at a young age, which is priceless as a parent.

Because Double Up Food Bucks are only to be used on Michigan produce, I also felt great about supporting local growers. I am certainly not alone in my appreciation toward the Fair Food Network.

“With three young children, I very much appreciated the opportunity to stretch my food budget with Double Up Bucks,” says Jessica Babcock, another local mother. “It allowed me to cook meals for my family with fresh, wholesome, local ingredients. I enjoyed going to the farmers’ market with the kids and letting them pick out the freshest fruits and vegetables that looked appealing to them. It taught them a lot about eating healthy and enjoying a wide variety of foods.”

Trying to eat healthy can often be tricky for those on a tight budget—unfortunately, the cheapest foods are often the most processed and the least nutritious. The Blackfords already work hard to offer affordable prices at their market, but getting double the fruits and vegetables makes an even bigger difference for those who are struggling to stretch dollars.

Marvin’s Garden Spot also participates in other, similar programs, including WIC Project FRESH and Senior Project FRESH, which provide



In addition to their US-31 storefront, Marvin’s Garden also sets up at the Sara Hardy Farmers’ Market in Traverse City. Photo by Jacob Royal Wheeler.

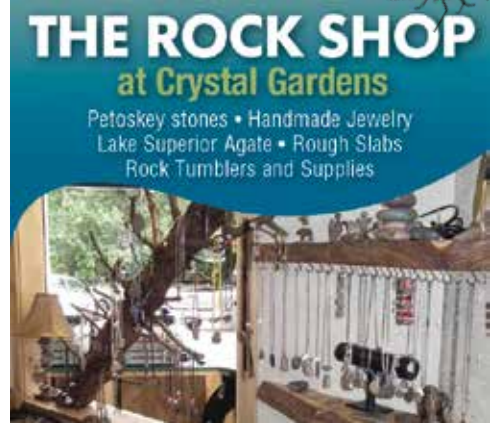
those who qualify with tokens for fresh produce.

### Fall Fun

Marvin’s Garden Spot is more than just a small-town business; it is a place for locals to come together and give back to one another. Every year, they have a fall festival before closing for the season. The fun-filled day takes place the Saturday before Halloween, rain or shine. Games and prizes are provided for guests, and anyone is welcome to attend. The event is a way for the Blackfords to give back to the community for keeping their business alive. They truly care about their customers. This market and the people who run it are undoubtedly gems of Benzie County.

*The Double Up Food Bucks program kicked off in Detroit in 2009 and has since become successful statewide. The Fair Food Network’s efforts have even allowed for expansion to grocery stores. A complete list of participating markets and more information on the program can be found at DoubleUpFoodBucks.org.*

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Entries are due to the art center between Friday September 9 and Saturday, September 10  
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[Oliverartcenterfrankfort.org](http://Oliverartcenterfrankfort.org)

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